Jesus, Son of Man

Richard Roberts

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JESUS, SON OF MAN

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Short Studies in the Gospel Portrait of our Lord

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By
Richard Roberts

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"The Highway to Christ,"
etc.

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PREFACE

J. C. VAN DYKE asks in his book, "The Meaning of Pictures," whether any painter ever painted a wholly satisfactory face of Christ. It is sure that no painter whose art has been lighted by faith would venture to claim so great a distinction. And he who, being in any measure sensitive to the unique splendour of Jesus, ventures to write concerning Him must be content to find his work not only unsatisfactory but also unworthy.

The studies of which this little volume consists are incidental to an independent study of the significance of the Incarnation, which the writer is endeavouring to make for his own satisfaction. Most of the studies have already appeared in the *Sunday School Times* of Philadelphia, and I am indebted to

my friend, Mr. C. G. Trumbull, for his permission to reprint them. They now appear with the hope that the reading of them may yield to others some at least of the profit which the writing of them brought to myself.

RICHARD ROBERTS.

CROUCH HILL,
Jan. 6, 1913.

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JESUS, SON OF MAN

I

THE AWAKENING

THE silence of the sacred records concerning the boyhood and youth of Jesus is only broken by the beautiful and illuminating story of His first Passover, and we may assume that it was preserved because the incident was regarded by the early Christian mind as possessing first-rate significance. It is probable that the incident was interpreted in the early Christian tradition as indicating the first emergence in the soul of Jesus of the consciousness of a high and peculiar calling, and we are hardly wrong when we regard this episode as the real starting-point of the growth and development of the self-consciousness of Jesus. Here, at this point, Jesus is beginning to know Himself.

It would, however, be pure folly to attempt to hang on the word which Jesus

is recorded to have said at the time a whole scheme of life and feeling, as though everything had dawned upon Him in the Temple that He ever after knew or thought. This saying of Jesus has a strangely mature sound, but even young children have a habit of saying deep, mature things, of the entire significance of which they have not even a remote idea. It is impossible to think that we have here more than one of those great but only partly understood intuitions which rush upon us, it may be, in a confused medley, when for the first time our souls are awakened to a consciousness of themselves and the great wide world about them, and that greater, wider world which lies outside our common concrete experiences and stretches far away out into the endless unknown spaces beyond. That is a great moment —indeed, the greatest moment of our life —when the soul as it were sheds its swaddling clothes and stands upon its own feet, begins to feel a dim, glimmering sense of its own place in the sum of things, and recognises with a quick, warm flush of joy that it has eyes of its own with which to look out upon the

world. It is at this point that it seems to me that we meet Jesus.

The only other alternative is that we regard Jesus as a kind of prodigy—an alternative which, at this time of day, we cannot accept. It is one of the remarkable characteristics of the Gospels as we have them that there is an entire absence of the prodigious and precocious from the story of His early life. There are apocryphal gospels which represent the boy Jesus as performing miracles, and in many ways carrying Himself as an infant wonder. But none of these things have found their way into our Gospels. The solitary reference which they make to the boyhood and youth of Jesus, apart from this incident, leads us to infer that He was in every respect a normal, natural boy. Boys differ a good deal from one another, and I do not think that the boy Jesus differed from the lads of Nazareth in any unusual and abnormal way.

It is to stultify our entire conception of the way of God's working to imagine that to this lad of twelve there could come that full consciousness of His destiny which some would still read into His

words. God does not, in the common way of things, invade the young, tender mind with a complete set of mature experiences, and He did not do it with Jesus. When Jesus spoke the parables of the sprouting seed and the growing plant he was surely interpreting his own experience of spiritual development. We are able to trace in the Gospel story the stages by which the mature self-consciousness of Jesus grew. Jesus was no exception to the Divine plan. He was the embodiment of it, and we should expect to see in Jesus—and I think we do see in Him—such a process of growth and development as we are accustomed to look for in the history of the race and the individual soul.

No doubt, the visit to Jerusalem precipitated a crisis in the soul of Jesus. That is clear enough; but then the whole way of development is through an ascending scale of crises. There comes a time when various multiform influences converge upon a point, and out of that convergence the soul issues forth with a new power, with a wider and higher point of view, with an enlargement of vision and comprehension which makes

its life henceforth wholly different from what it has been. Yet the new life is not untrue to the old life. What has happened is simply that what was fragmentary and piecemeal in the old have been organised and unified to form the new. And the new life goes on its way absorbing new things, contracting new habits, assimilating new knowledge, until another point comes when a process of readjustment and reorganisation once more unifies the life and renews it. The history of all life is the history of a recurring series of new beginnings.

Modern psychology, especially religious psychology, has a very illuminating thing to say to us in this connection. It has been found that there are in the life of the growing human being three points of extreme susceptibility to religious influence, three points when the process of growth has induced unusual sensitiveness to spiritual impressions. The first of these is at the age of twelve, the beginning of the period which is now commonly spoken of among students as adolescence. It appears that a great mass of people receive their first definite, permanent, and effective religi-

ous impressions at about the age of twelve. It would be beside the point to discuss here the various questions that this fact raises. It is enough now to record the fact, and along with it to remark the wonderful and far-seeing wisdom of the Jews who brought their lads at this sensitive point under the tremendous influence of Jerusalem amid the doings and sights of the Passover. Some years ago I kept the Passover at a Jewish Rabbi's house in Jerusalem. Naturally I could not, and did not, understand the entire significance of the ceremony, but it struck me, who stood outside—and so far outside—the circle of ideas and emotions which the observance awakened, as a wonderfully impressive moment when this little family, with countless multitudes of other families in many and distant lands, began to recall and recite, after so many centuries, the story of that historic deliverance out of the house of bondage. True, it was only a futile survival, a symbolism which had been transcended by a vaster reality, but I could not resist the spell of it. There you have the secret of the persistency of the Jew, of his refusal to be

merged into the nations among whom he dwells. Think of it, then, as it would be nineteen hundred years ago, when the whole people from the ends of the land, and a great multitude from the Dispersion, forgathered in the Holy City, and in the Temple, with this only in their minds, with all the remembrance of Divine protection and all the promise of future glory which it seemed to entail; and think of a young lad, at this impressionable, plastic age, coming into this immense, swelling tide of feeling and memory, seeing for the first time those great places and institutions, and the wonderful ritual about which so much of national tradition and aspiration gathered. The result was certain and inevitable—he came there a lad; he went away a Jew.

Now, this was not quite what happened to the lad Jesus; something, indeed, did happen, and it was a stupendous thing, but it is difficult to explain how it happened, and equally difficult to interpret its content, for the simple reason that we know so little, first of all, of the boyhood of Jesus, and second of the precise character of the religious atmosphere both

within and without the home in which He was brought up. He must have had the ordinary education which every Jewish boy received—first of all at home from His mother, and secondly in the elementary school, of which a very large number had been established throughout Palestine a century before His birth. The curriculum of this education was pretty well defined; it began with the Scriptures and ended with the Scriptures. There was no other text-book, and the education was religious from beginning to end.

But to say that the education was religious is not to say that it was spiritual, and what seems to me to need explanation is that spiritual tendency which culminates in our Lord's visit to Jerusalem. It was not merely a religious enthusiasm, nor a sense of organic identity with the historic national spirit, nor any of these subordinate elements of an awakened soul-life that came to Jesus in Jerusalem, but a crystal-clear, unmistakable apprehension of spiritual values. It was not the national hope nor the Temple ritual that had laid hold of Him. It was a supreme concern for spiritual

realities. He had gone past the mere outside of the religious interest. He had reached to the very heart of it. "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" The Temple had carried Him beyond itself, even beyond its own Holiest, right into the heart of the central and final reality.

Now, His previous education had something to do with this. It must have had in it real spiritual elements, and I fancy we must trace it back to his mother. Of Joseph we know very little, but Mary must have been touched to fine issues. It is true that she did not always understand her son, but that was because later on she failed to keep step with Him. Yet there had been a time when Mary had led him step by step into some of God's secrets. What the domestic religious atmosphere of that time was we cannot say; what the parts of Scripture were which chiefly affected it; but I am inclined to think, from our Lord's striking use of Deuteronomy in the Temptation episode, and from certain other circumstances, that the religion of the Nazareth home must have been a much more spiritual thing than the formal

public piety of the time, with its rabbinical elaborations of rite and doctrine. The child Jesus was not merely religious, He was spiritually minded. And the whole world is an entirely different place from the spiritual mind. The hills and the valleys, the fields and the wild flowers —and you need to go to Galilee in the spring-time to know what glory wild flowers may have—all spoke their own message to Him. From the hilltop behind His home He could see, in the distance, the outline of Mount Carmel, with all its romantic associations, sloping down to the plain of Esdraelon, that historic field of battle where so many issues had been fought. Away to the west stretched endlessly the silver Mediterranean, to lave the shores of distant, unknown lands. To the child Jesus, with His sensitive soul, all this meant something, and meant it intensely. It is no mere fancy that pictures Him absorbing all its mysterious suggestions into His young, pure heart. It puzzled Him and perplexed Him. Dim, unintelligible aspirations swelled within Him; wonderful, terrible hopes began to agitate in His soul; His young spirit

was cast into a strange ferment which He could not understand.

And then Jerusalem came, and all the confused medley of feeling was precipitated into a clear, definite consciousness. His soul was awakened; its eye was opened, and it saw straight through everything and found God. All the suppressed and inarticulate intuitions of Nazareth found their root and their fruition at that centre; everything in the lad's soul fell into its own place. There was His Father, there was Himself—the twin centres of the whole scheme of things—and the child must henceforth be about His new-found Father's things.

It was an overwhelming experience, and it was not unnatural that the boy should for the moment be unmindful of the immediate interests of His common life. Parents, friends, home, everything had become remote, faint, transparent in the first flush of the new light. And then, when the first wild stirrings had subsided, and the world had become near and intimate again, we find Jesus, docile and obedient as ever, returning to the distant Galilean home, where He was to digest this new experience and enter into

that long discipline of eighteen years before He emerges again into the light of history. But this was the starting-point and the keynote of the new development — this warm, intimate, familiar, irresistible sense of God.

II

THE SEALING AND THE TESTING

FROM the time that Jesus returned from Jerusalem to Nazareth, a lad of twelve, until the time He once more emerges into the light of history eighteen silent years have elapsed. They were years of self-discipline and preparation, during which the experience of that memorable Passover at Jerusalem was maturing into a settled consciousness of a high and peculiar destiny and of a unique relation to God.

The indication which Jesus received that His hour had at last come was connected with a remarkable religious revival of which a kinsman of His own was the moving spirit. John the Baptist,

> " Like some lone peak, by the Creator
> Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn,

emerged, like Amos had done before him, out of the wilderness, preaching a

gospel of repentance. He had all the marks of the prophet—the sternness, the austerity, the power, and the persistency, and it was a long time since a prophet's voice had been heard in the land. From Malachi to John stretch four long, dim centuries. Circumstances had ripened the people for a religious revival. Fed upon the unsatisfying unleavened bread of ceremonial, the people had come to feel what one of the prophets called a "famine for the hearing of the Word of the Lord," and they went out in great multitudes to hear it. John's message was not new—it was the old prophetic call to repentance, the old prophetic proclamation of judgment, the old prophetic promise of forgiveness. But it was what the people wanted, what their hearts were hungering for, and they thronged to hear this new voice in the wilderness which had broken the silence of the centuries.

With the multitudes Jesus came, and submitted to the baptism which John was administering as a symbol of repentance to the people, and which unwillingly and under protest he administered to Jesus. John saw from the nature of the case that there could be no baptism unto repent-

ance here. Rather, said John, "I have need to be baptised of Thee." How John knew Jesus, how he recognised in Him the One whose way he was sent to prepare, whose ministry and message were to be the fulfilment of his own, it is impossible for us to say. It may have been foreknowledge, it may have been spiritual insight, it may have been special illumination. It may have been all three. What is clear is that John knew when he baptised Jesus he was baptising no ordinary person. It is a wonderful tribute to the self-abandoning devotion of John to his mission that he suffered himself so easily to sink into a subordinate place. Even prophets are sometimes jealous, but jealousy never came to John. John knew that he was the morning star, which must pale and disappear before the rising sun. "He must increase, I must decrease."

John's wonderful apprehension of the uniqueness of Jesus received an equally wonderful vindication in the act of baptism. It was accompanied by some singular spiritual portent, the inwardness of which is interpreted for us in the Gospels. The Holy Ghost fell upon Him, and a voice came out of Heaven: "Thou art

My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Eighteen years before it was the Son, with young and hardly understanding lips, who had spoken of His Father. Now it was the Father, in a supreme and unmistakable way, Who is owning His Son. I see in this happening the climax and issue, and the divine sealing of that growth of Jesus' self-consciousness which had been in progress during the eighteen years of discipline and preparation, of quiet contemplation and patient waiting in His father's house at Nazareth. Here God confirms and ratifies, by a signal act, that sense of a unique relation to Himself, and of a peculiar destiny which had begun to grow in Jesus' mind at the Passover in Jerusalem and which had grown consistently and clearly ever since.

There are two questions relating to our Lord's baptism, and the experience which accompanied it, which do not seem to me to be capable of wholly satisfactory answers. The first is why Jesus sought baptism at all. The baptism of John had clear reference to sin. It was the symbol and seal of repentance, and if we are to judge, as we surely must, the silent life

of Jesus from His public life, a baptism of repentance in this sense was meaningless in His case. And yet the baptism must have had a meaning. Jesus, with His quick sense of reality, could never have submitted to any empty formality. Perhaps the clue lies in this—repentance means a change of mind and life; it marks a turning-point, a crisis, a new beginning, and it must have been the sense that He had arrived at a turning-point in His life that Jesus wished to bear witness to by submitting Himself to baptism. Hitherto He had lived silently and obscurely, away from the crowd and the swelling tides of human feeling, nursing His secret in His own heart; but now He knew that His hour was come, and that He was to adventure forth upon the welter of human life, with its sin and sorrow, its vacillating hopes and its half-blind impulses, there to bear the Word of His Father and to do His work. Here was a change of life indeed, from the quiet of Nazareth into the tumult of the world, from that calm haven where for eighteen years he had lain sheltering and gathering strength into that wild unknown sea of human life, with its endless

perils and its uncharted shores. The call had come, and Jesus sought baptism as the symbol and promise of obedience to it.

The other question is: What was the exact content of the word which was spoken to Jesus at His baptism? What did it mean of new experience, of additional self-consciousness? How far did it assist His self-knowledge? May we not conjecture (to borrow a word from the vocabulary of our common spiritual experience, and to use it at a somewhat different angle) that the voice brought *assurance* to Jesus—the absolute conviction of the divine favour; but more than that, it must also have brought the absolute certainty of His own peculiar Sonship, and of that high and singular mission which was entailed by His Sonship. The one thing which every prophet and every great human leader needs is to be sure of himself and his calling. Self-distrust and hesitancy are fatal flaws in the equipment of such as these. It was this assurance of Himself, of His Sonship, His calling, that came to Jesus at His baptism.

Though we cannot doubt that Jesus

was maturing into some such sense as this during His eighteen years in Nazareth, yet it came upon Him now with so much intensity that its entire significance was not quite clear to Him. One recalls how Paul, after his conversion, went into Arabia to think out quietly in those silent solitudes this wonderful thing that had happened to him. And into the solitudes Jesus also went—into that stern, barren, inhospitable wilderness of Judea, its silence broken only in the night-time by the dismal howl of the jackal, to be alone with God and to think out His situation. He knew that a great mission lay before Him, and the way was not yet clear. We cannot doubt that it was this that filled His mind during those forty lonely days. What should be His line of action? How should He usher in this ministry which was committed to Him? He knew that His destiny was to win the world back to God. How should He fulfil it? He knew that He had come to establish the kingdom of God. How should He go about it?

There seems to me to be something indescribably impressive in this deliber-

ate pause which Jesus took on the threshold of His ministry. He felt that the issues were too vast to permit any preliminary experimentation. He could not afford to make mistakes, and He stood waiting until the road became clear, and then He trod it without swerving to the end. Once His line of action was determined, He never deviated from it. We are justified in assuming that the Temptation story represents the mental conflict which Jesus underwent during this period. Of these conflicts the recorded temptations formed the climax. Here the alternating impulses which agitated in the mind of Jesus took upon themselves definite and acute shape, and nothing helps us to realise more clearly the precise line of action which Jesus had resolved upon than the way in which He deals with these other alternatives which had been proposed to Him.

Of the Temptation episode itself there are many and diverse interpretations, and many of these are very reasonable and plausible. It is surely quite idle to suppose that one of these only must be right and all the rest wrong. Many of them may be at the same time

right and perfectly true. We find, in dealing with great minds like Shakespeare and Goethe, that their words have a very much larger significance than their surface meaning. Words are only symbols, and they only help us to approach reality, and beneath the words which great minds utter there is concentration of reality which yields untold riches to a sympathetic and intelligent insight. Do we not say that the theologians read more into Paul than Paul ever meant? But Paul's words only deal with the top layer of Paul's experience. Words do not cover the whole of reality—they are mere indices, mere finger-posts. When we realise that these three temptations dealt with the problem of a whole life, and that, as it turned out to be, the richest and most significant life the world has ever seen, it is not difficult to believe that there is beneath the mere words a concentration of reality which a hundred interpretations could not exhaust. The whole height and depth and length and breadth of Jesus' life were involved in these temptations, and until we have wholly and finally mastered the signi-

ficance of Jesus' life—and we are a long way yet from that—we may be perfectly sure that we have not finally interpreted the significance of the Temptation episode.

It is necessary, however, before we endeavour to appraise the precise character of the different temptations, that we should gain some idea of Jesus' own conception of what His great commission was. This we can only do by recalling some elements of His teaching. It may be summarised briefly in this way—that Jesus knew He had come to bring in the Kingdom of God, that the inner bond of this Kingdom was personal loyalty to Himself. He was conscious that He possessed the power to evoke this loyalty; from the start He did not hesitate to demand it. He preached the Kingdom by preaching Himself. He had to gather men around His own person, and the problem for Him was how best He should do this. What was the best, soundest, swiftest way of binding men to Himself? In the Temptations there are three methods proposed.

The first was the suggestion to "command that these stones should be made

bread." Dr. Denney explains this—rightly, I think—as a temptation to establish the Kingdom on loaves and fishes, to use His great and unique power to provide material inducements to men to follow Him. A great number of men did, as a matter of fact, follow Him, mistakenly, from motives of this kind, but they were misled not by Jesus, but by their own cupidity. They thought that He proposed to emancipate and restore the Jewish state, and that, in the event of His doing so, there would be rewards and spoils for His followers. We know that Jesus gave no countenance to this spirit. On the contrary, He deliberately denounced and suppressed it. He was true throughout to the resolve which He made in the wilderness. Jesus saw plainly that the kingdom of God could not be established by bribery masquerading as philanthropy. To do this was to build the Kingdom on a false foundation, on the flesh, on the material; and the whole point and essence of the Kingdom was that it was spiritual. Bread might be scarce, and it would afford Him a splendid opportunity of gaining a following, if only

He would set out to feed the people. But, though bread might be scarce, men needed something else even more than they needed bread. They need "the Word that cometh forth from the mouth of the Lord," and that alone can produce in men the stuff, the mettle of the Kingdom. This, then, is the first point settled. The Kingdom is not to be established by any bribery, however specious.

The next suggestion was that He might cast Himself from one of the Temple towers, and by a miraculous escape establish Himself as a kind of portent, a prodigy, a wonder-worker, and gather people around Him in that way. It is not only for bread that men are constantly hungry. They are hungry for sensation, they crave what is curious and extraordinary. The bizarre, the unusual, the marvellous—how steadily they draw us all! It was a peculiarly subtle temptation—to set afoot the Kingdom by the use of sensationalism. But Jesus saw that, to establish the Kingdom thus were to establish it on a bubble. If the Kingdom was to be established soundly it must be by methods which would stand

the test of time—by the methods of pervasive reasonableness. Prodigies, portents, marvels are things of a day; they are momentary things that come and go. But quiet reason abides, and the Kingdom could not be ushered in, and remain for ever condemned because it was ushered in, by an outrage upon common sense, by what was no more than a gratuitous appeal to a gaping, wonder-hungry crowd.

Finally, the tempter invites Him to worship him. There is a certain cynical boldness in the suggestion. "Here they are—the kingdoms of this earth. They are mine. Thou hast set out to conquer them from me. It will be war every step of the way. Come, why enter upon this long, toilsome fight? Let us compromise." It was the temptation to take the short and easy way, to take the line of least resistance, to establish the Kingdom of God by methods of compromise. Jesus saw clearly that, to make a single concession on moral principle was to annihilate the Kingdom of God at the start. The Kingdom could only thrive by the cry of *No surrender, No compromise, No quarter.* And Jesus would

not haul down the flag. If it meant a fight to the finish—well, then, so be it. Since there was no other way, let the issue be joined at once. And it was.

Neither by bribery, nor by sensationalism, nor by compromise would Jesus set out on His mission. Whatever immediate glamour of popular success these things might bring, in the end they spelt failure. There was no path for Him but the straight, narrow path of pure, quiet, uncompromising proclamation of the Word of God. It was the longest way round, yet the swiftest way home. It was a way that required patience, courage, long waiting, but it was the only sure, the only possible way. Jesus deliberately chose it. He was content to sow the seed securely and to leave the reaping of it to others. He did not crave, as we do, for immediate results. He could afford to wait, and so He made no haste, choosing to build securely rather than swiftly, building not for a lifetime, but for eternity. And that kind of building is slow.

III

JESUS, LEADER OF MEN

PERHAPS the first impression which the serious student of the Gospels receives is connected with certain large and imposing qualities of Jesus' personality. The essence of greatness is in all that He ever said or did. "There are people in the world," says Walter Bagehot, "who cannot write the commonest letter upon the commonest affair of business without giving a just idea of themselves. The Duke of Wellington is an example which at once occurs of this. You may read a dispatch of his upon bullocks or horseshoe nails, and yet you will feel an interest because somehow among the words seems to lurk the mind of a great general." In the whole story of Jesus there is nothing trivial. Everything is on a large scale. The simplest parable has something of the movement of a great epic. One feels throughout the whole story that one is being led into

high, spacious places. We lose our own littleness in this company. The greatness of Jesus is of a kind which makes great everything He touches. His teaching, His friendships, His dealings with men, are all charged with the massiveness of His own personality.

It would be an error to suppose that the men of His time, even His friends, saw this as plainly as we do. The glamour and romance which gather around a personality are for the most part the products of time and distance. In His life, the greatness and kingliness of Jesus went hand in hand with the most perfect simplicity and lowliness. Jesus Himself had no consciousness of greatness, in the usual sense of that word; and He assumed none of its livery. His power over men was derived neither from anything He claimed nor from any position He occupied; it lay rather in a certain magnetism which men found irresistible. He went to a company of fisher-folk, and said to them, "Follow Me." And "straightway they forsook all and followed Him." He went to a tax-collector in his booth, and said to him, "Follow Me": and

immediately the man got up and followed Him. Had these men been asked why they did so, they would probably have been hard put to give a clear answer. They would simply have said that they could not help it. So He lived, drawing men and holding them to Himself with bonds of loyalty and affection which were rarely broken.

Antecedently there is nothing to account for this power. He was an ordinary Jewish lad, the son of a carpenter, who had received the normal education of Jewish boys. He hailed from an obscure and despised township from which no devout Jew expected any good. He set out without pomp or circumstance, without pretension or proclamation. Yet men gave up everything to follow Him. He made demands upon them that no man had ever hitherto dared to make upon his fellows. He exacted an obedience which was absolute and unqualified; and from those who felt His power He received all He asked. Those whom He did not thus touch, even His enemies, had to respect Him. They might hate Him, but they could not laugh at Him. They tried persistently

to compass His death, and at last succeeded; but that showed that it was not contempt but fear that they felt for Him. It was easy enough to deride Him upon the cross, in the hour of His weakness and seeming defeat. But no man was found with the hardihood to do so to His face.

"*Strong* Son of God"! So Tennyson addresses Him in "In Memoriam." It is this singular personal force which is first of all borne upon us as we read His life; and it was this that inevitably made Him a leader of men. It was not that sheer masterfulness of spirit that we sometimes encounter in men which compels men and things to bend to its will or else be trampled upon and broken. We have experience of men of strong personality who get their own way by the sheer momentum of their movement. Nothing can withstand them. They force their will upon others by the simple method of asserting it strongly. In a recent work, a certain living general is described in this way: "The bonds which united him and his subordinates were those of stern discipline on the one hand, and on the other the respect due to superior talent and the confidence in

the resourcefulness of a strong and masterful spirit rather than the affectionate obedience yielded to the behests of a genial chief." This clearly was not the quality of Jesus' leadership. His power over men sprang from other sources, partly in the men themselves, but most of all in Him. It is true that these men were sensible of their need of something which they instinctively felt Jesus could give them. They were simple men of simple life, yet conscious of powers and aspirations which they were unable to realise. It was the promise that they would be able to realise all these through contact with Jesus that gave His appeal the mighty force which commanded so ready an obedience.

But what was it in Jesus that revealed that promise? What was it that forged a bond between Him and these men that death could not dissolve?

The foundation of it certainly lay in the plain moral perfection of Jesus, in that transparent purity of heart and motive which constitutes the first condition of confidence. Here, clearly, was a man to be trusted, a man who could not lie. To the moral instincts of simple folk

this is a thing which cannot be mistaken. The intuition of a child in reading character is invariably true, and this was the way in which Jesus impressed Himself upon these grown-up children of Galilee.

From this the rest followed. Trust blossomed into love, and it was the pressure of strong personal affection that bound men to Jesus as with bands of steel. For the trust was never shaken. The early confidence was never compromised. Jesus turned out to be all that they had expected. It was neither respect for superior talent, nor confidence in the resourcefulness of a master-spirit, that made Jesus a leader of men. It was the trust and the love which He naturally awakened in those whom He touched.

Doubtless there were those among this early following who were attracted on other less personal grounds. The time in which He appeared was a time of unrest. There had been and yet were to be frequent popular risings, the mainspring of which was the passionate nationalism of the Jew together with his fierce hatred of his Roman lord. Theudas and Judas of Galilee—these are the two names which the Scriptures have pre-

served of popular leaders of this type. Whenever such men appeared there were not wanting those who were prepared to rally around them. But in all these cases it was the cause which appealed, rather than the man. The Jew, despite the strange vicissitudes of his history, cherished the undying hope of future empire; and with the characteristic improvidence of the genuine Oriental he went out gladly with anyone who promised to deliver him and bring in his golden age. Probably some of those who first gathered around Jesus were actuated by this feeling. But Jesus never at any time encouraged it. He made no pretensions to popular leadership of this type. He never cherished any illusions concerning a temporal empire, though even that was suggested to Him. He had, indeed, no cause but Himself.

It is true that He spoke much of the coming Kingdom of God, but He did not mean by this the return of the old political theocracy. The French monarch who said, "The State—*I* am the State," has helped us to a definition of the Kingdom of God. Jesus might well say, "The Kingdom of God—*I* am the

Kingdom of God." It was all gathered up in Himself. It had no existence apart from Him. He called men not into the Kingdom but to Himself. To come to Him was to become a freeman of the Kingdom of God. The franchise of the Kingdom did not depend upon the acceptance of the laws of the Kingdom, but upon the establishment of a personal relationship to Himself.

This emphasis and insistence upon the centrality of His own person is characteristic of Him throughout His ministry. Usually, the man who speaks much of *I* and *me* is regarded as a pompous egoist, and is discounted accordingly. His value is ordinarily in inverse ratio to his own estimate of himself. We say that he puts all his goods in his shop window. Yet Jesus is for ever speaking of Himself, and there is never a suggestion of egoism or self-esteem in it at any time. "Come unto *Me*." "Bring him hither to *Me*." "*I* am the way, the truth, and the life." "*I* am come that they might have life." "All that came before *Me* were thieves and robbers." Not only were His followers sure of Him; He was altogether sure of Himself. His self-

consciousness was perfect, and it was never shown to be mistaken. Once only did He seem to hesitate—that was in the agony of the Garden; and He emerged conqueror even there. This is why He made no mistakes, why His judgment was never at fault. He stood upon a perfectly settled and immovable place, looked steadily out upon men and the world, and moved to His goal with sure and unwavering steps. In the life which He lived before men, He never vacillated or faltered; but He passed along in a perfect, unbroken calm. His self-consciousness was His strength, and it never failed Him.

He could not hide from Himself the fact that He was setting afoot a wide and lasting movement. There was indeed no reason why He should do so. That was what He had come to accomplish. But He was under no misapprehension as to the inner character of the movement. There are passages that seem to indicate that He intended it to be primarily a national movement; but it was inherent in its very nature that it could not remain a national movement. Israel, the lost sheep of tribes, was no doubt upper-

most in His heart. But if He intended to set afoot a national movement, it was to be in no sense political. Jesus had read too deeply into the history of the past to imagine that there could be any unity of His own factious, turbulent kinsmen on a political basis. Whatever quarrel He may have had with the existing order did not affect the course of His own purpose. It was the genius of the Romans that for a long period of their imperial history they combined their stern rule with a certain toleration in religious matters—which probably was a half-contemptuous, half-politic concession to the pride of conquered peoples. It was so at this time in Palestine, and in this circumstance lay the possibility of a really united Israel on a spiritual basis, alongside of, yet independent of and indifferent to, the imperial machinery of Rome. The organised state did not come within Jesus' purview. His leadership moved in another universe.

No doubt, had the Jews accepted the leadership of Jesus, there might have ensued—as by-products—very far-reaching political consequences. But Jesus was not concerned for these. He never

gave them a thought. "When He saw the multitudes, He had compassion upon them because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." That was His point of view. He looked upon a broken, shattered people whose distemper no political surgery could heal, whose *hearts* had first of all to be mended. It was thus He conceived His leadership. His leading was first of all to be a healing.

It goes without saying, therefore, that He was no iconoclast. His work of healing would have been ill served by an assault upon old institutions. Jesus was conservative in the best sense. He even made concessions to popular and official prejudice where that did not conflict with essential principles. "Go show thyself to the priest," He said to the cleansed leper; and in more than one way He acquiesced in the old traditional institutions and customs of His people. He never rode roughshod over the susceptibilities of ignorant people, nor did He at any time raise unnecessary dust as He went His way.

At the same time, He never overlooked the element of revolt which was involved

in His mission. When He came up against a vicious and deeply entrenched traditionalism, He never compromised; and not infrequently He broke out in strong denunciation of the corruption and the abuse which had gathered around the essential spirit of the old. For with the old in itself, Jesus had no quarrel. It was good so far as it went; but it did not go far enough. He recognised that His mission entailed a movement beyond the old, and that it could never harmonise with the outer forms in which the old was embodied. The new wine could not be accommodated in the old skins; nor would the new cloth hang on to the old. For the new spirit there must be new forms. The justification of Jesus' leadership lay in His conviction that He was bringing something new into the life of the world. He wanted no conflict; yet He saw that conflict was inevitable. It was the paradox and the tragedy of His leadership that with the healing He had to give a sword. He knew that He was setting father and son, mother and daughter, at variance. But there was no escape from this issue. In any case, He knew that the brunt

of the conflict would fall on Himself; and when it came He did not shrink.

For He knew no fear. The fear of man was an emotion He never experienced; and He possessed all the other great heroic qualities — and something more. It was the boast of Michael Angelo that no one could read on his face the story of his weariness and longing. Certainly no man ever read defeat on the face of Jesus. There is truly something colossal in the way He stands out at the end. That old warrior Socrates drank his hemlock with a fine contempt of his judges and of the Athenian mob. General Gordon turned his back to the approaching assassin with a gesture of disdain, not condescending to the use of the revolver he held in his hand. Jesus met His captors with the same unconcern for Himself, but with *pity* for them. This is the supreme invincibility, the most perfect heroism. His great unconquerable spirit could in the straits of death pray for the ignorant crowd which had brought Him there. This is the very utmost triumph of greatness.

It belongs to these characteristics that the leadership of Jesus was essentially a

quiet force, "too full for sound or foam." Leaders of popular movements have not always despised occasional displays of fireworks. To make a stir, to boom the movement, is a part of the programme. But "He did not strive nor cry aloud, neither was His voice heard in the streets." It sounds remote and unreal to us to-day that a man should set out on a great enterprise without a flourish of trumpets. Yet it was so that Jesus set out. He selected a few ignorant craftsmen as His colleagues. He issued no startling manifesto, but told His secrets quietly to the mixed hungry crowds which followed Him. He never sought visibility or publicity, and only acquiesced in it when it was thrust upon Him. He never sought the crowd; it was the crowd that sought Him. He went about His business in His own calm way, and He knew He was right. And by to-day we know it, too.

Much more might be said concerning the way in which He manifested the true quality of leadership. We would see, for instance, that like a true leader He never asked His followers to go where He was not prepared to go before, or

to make a sacrifice which He was not ready to make. Some of these qualities we may meet again, as, for instance, when we consider His insight and foresight in the selection and discipline of lieutenants, in His conduct of the conflicts and controversies which were forced upon Him, in His disposition of times and seasons, and of men and things. We should also come, in the course of our inquiry upon that unhesitating faith in the future which He possessed and communicated to His followers—that assured outlook upon life and the world which is cardinal to all effective leadership, and which eliminated doubt and despair from His vocabulary. One point, however, remains to be spoken of here.

There was one occasion concerning which it is recorded that many turned their backs on Jesus and walked no more with Him. Yet there is nothing in the narrative that indicates that Jesus was surprised or distressed by this apostasy. It happened immediately after some very candid and faithful speaking on the part of Jesus; and it looks as though He was deliberately endeavouring to weed out the undesirable and unstable elements in His

following. There were, no doubt, many who were mere passengers, contributing and likely to contribute nothing to the working of the ship, and as broken water lay ahead it was necessary that all superfluous cargo should be got out of the way. Jesus was evidently clearing the decks for action. Those who were looking out for spoils and advantages would only be a hindrance and a perplexity in the trying period which was already at hand, and Jesus therefore views their departure without misgiving. His genius of leadership was too sure to allow Him to be misled by a merely quantitative test of the movement which was now afoot. This surely is a reflection for our own time. We are in the bondage of statistics, and think that all is well with us if our figures are fat. Jesus knew better; and in nothing does He attest the power and reality of His gifts of leadership so plainly as when He thins out His following in order that, when the shock came, there should be no camp followers to start a panic. Facing the troublous times before Him, He took care to have with Him those only whose faith and love could stand the worst that might happen.

IV

JESUS THE TEACHER

It is hardly too much to say that in religious and moral education the personality and character of the teacher count for more than do the contents and materials of the teaching. The true teacher communicates not so much a quantum of knowledge as a certain spirit. Robert Louis Stevenson, speaking of Wordsworth, says: "I do not know that you learn a lesson. You need not agree with any of his beliefs, and yet a spell is cast. Such are best teachers. A dogma learnt is only a new error—the old one was perhaps as good. But a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the plane of art; it is themselves and what is best in themselves that they communicate." Here is the whole matter in a nutshell. Religious teaching is in the end best given, not in the mere communication of re-

ligious knowledge, but in the spirit and the way in which it is done. One teacher will teach more religion in one lesson on English grammar than another will do in a month of what may be called "religious instruction." For religion is not knowledge. It is a spirit, and a life.

No more luminous illustration of the truth of this can be found than that afforded by the story of Jesus the Teacher. It is true that He communicated ideas; but His primary aim was to communicate Himself.

This is, however, very far from saying that the ideas are negligible, or that nothing is to be learned from His teaching devices. We possess a considerable volume of His spoken teaching; and educational writers have frequently pointed out that in the methods of teaching, in the use of questions, parables, and illustrations, in His object-lessons and His utilisation of persons and incidents as starting-points for a lesson, He has anticipated most of the approved devices of modern education.

After all, this is no great marvel. There is no great mystery about the art of teaching. It is nothing more or less

than common sense applied to a knowledge of the pupil's mind and its processes. The essence of sound teaching is a sound psychology, whether it be intuitive or acquired. Jesus "knew what was in man"; and He had no need that anyone should tell Him. He read character instantly with that swift, sure intuition which belongs to the little child and the pure in heart.

Take, for instance, the way He deals with the three candidates for discipleship—the scribe, the man who wished to bury his father, and the man who desired to return to make his farewells. Swift as lightning, Jesus had seen through their eyes into their hearts; and with equal swiftness came the precise word that each needed. Count the cost, said He to the impetuous scribe; follow Me, to the wavering second; finish your furrow, to the preoccupied third.

Men's souls lay before Him as an open book. He discerned Nathanael's guileless heart, and foresaw the impulsive Peter's ultimate fall. All His more general teaching shows how well He understood the common ground in His

kinsmen's hearts. Infallibly the thing He said and the way He said it went home—because He knew where He was sending it to. There is nothing abstract or academic about His teaching. He remembered whom He was speaking to, and everyone therefore knew what He was speaking about. Some preachers are said to talk over the heads of their hearers; but this was never true of Jesus. Of course, there are always some who, however plainly one speaks, will fail to understand; and Jesus encountered some of this kind. Indeed, on occasion, He came upon them in the circle of His most intimate pupils.

But no one can really *educate* without finding himself involved in this particular difficulty. For true education is always progressive in character; and if Jesus found Himself sometimes ahead of His pupils, it was because it had to be so. There is perhaps a note of disappointment in that word, "Do ye not yet understand?" which He spoke when the disciples had failed to grasp the meaning of His warning against the leaven of the Pharisees. But this very disappointment suggests one great quality of

Jesus' teaching. He would not have been disappointed in His disciples had He not first of all believed in them. And not only did He believe in them, but He made them understand that He believed in them—which led them to believe in the divine possibilities in themselves. This is a quality of all great teaching. It starts by inducing a measure of confidence in one's capacity. To believe in people and to make them realise that you believe in them, is the first condition of making them what you want them to be. They must be wholly convinced that the ideal is possible to them: not indeed to their unaided powers, but to their capacity for spiritual reinforcement. Lovey Mary, one of the heroines of the Cabbage Patch, says that people bluffed her into being good; that is, their confidence in her helped her to be what they believed her to be. Jesus enabled men to set out in good heart on the great quest.

These two qualities of Jesus the Teacher we register, then—He knew His pupils and He believed in them. The third is the mode in which He approached them.

Jesus, Son of Man

We have all had experience with teachers between whom and us a great gulf was fixed; and we remember with gratitude some others who made us think that they were learning with us, that they were beginning where we stood and going with us all the way. In all great teaching there must be some self-limitation: to the child the teacher must become as a child, think as a child, speak as a child. Jesus brought Himself down to the people as He found them and started from their level. He did not stand away at a distance above them and bid them come to Him. He made no pretensions; He assumed no authority; He never spoke *ex cathedra*. He stood in the midst, as He always did—one of themselves. "Learn of Me," He said, "for I am meek and lowly of heart." This was a strange attitude for a religious teacher to take in those days. Here were none of the pontifical poses of the Pharisee, no ponderous appeal to a mysterious authority inaccessible to the crowd, no pride of office—nothing of the external trappings that men were wont to look for in the religious teacher. This was clearly a simple-minded, lowly, ac-

cessible man. They could walk erect and unashamed in His presence. His nearness entailed no self-contempt, no sense of meanness. He made them feel they were men—like Himself, and that there should be no mistake, He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden: and I will give you rest." You are the people I want—not the mighty, the noble, the great, but you poor, despairing, helpless people of no account.

This was a new thing in the world. It came to this people like the promise of a jubilee: it was as a breaking of the springtime upon them that they should be respected and believed in and treated like men. With the Pharisees and the exactions of the ecclesiastical system on the one hand, and their Roman taskmasters on the other, the people were ground between the upper and the nether millstone; and to find themselves thus exalted was the dawning of an apocalypse. But Jesus went farther. He declared to these people that they had capacities and powers which might win for them empires wider than Cæsar's and wealth beyond Crœsus'.

It was a hard doctrine, incredible, impossible; and Jesus had to shock them into something like intelligent apprehension of His meaning by startling promises. It was not easy to awaken this oppressed peasantry. Jesus had to use the most daring metaphors in order to pierce the crust of hopelessness. "You have the power to move mountains," He told them, "if only you knew how to use it." "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Poor in spirit, meek—they were all this. Because they were so, lo! to their hands lay the kingdom of heaven and the abundance of the earth. Here was a people who had bemoaned its hard, ignoble lot in dumb despair, and here comes a Teacher who tells them that heaven and earth are at their feet. Here was a people who had been held bound in a dark, hopeless prison-house, and a Teacher comes bidding them believe the door is open, and that they could fare forth when they would, not merely into daylight and liberty, but into splendid empire. Here was emancipation indeed!

In their own souls, despite their poverty, their insignificance, their weakness, were powers which could conquer the world.

This is a paradox that worldly wisdom has not yet understood. Greatness, as men conceive it, is the prize of the strong, the masterful; but Jesus lays down the principle that not by might or by power, but by meekness, humility, faith, hope, love, shall men overcome the world. The great invincibilities are the spiritual instincts of mankind; these are the ultimate forces. But in the case of these Jewish peasants these instincts were not so much powers as they were potentialities, for as yet they did not know how to use them. They had to be educated, educed, drawn out. Hitherto they had been repressed and thwarted and stunted. How were they then to be drawn out?

In a word, Jesus' plan was to direct these potentialities upon God; and this was the next stage in the process of education. To these people God was remote, inaccessible, "on heights too high for their aspiring." Jesus brought God down from the high heavens and set Him in the midst of them and round about them, constituted Him—

if I may put it thus awkwardly—their centre and their environment. Our powers can never expand beyond their environment. The world about us is inevitably the measure of our natural powers, and, until they find their proper environment, of our spiritual powers as well. Faith and hope and love are, in the natural man, bounded by the material and the tangible, and spend themselves upon the inadequacies of a world of sense. But Jesus shattered this narrowness to bits, and put God round about the people; and what a God! Not the austere Judge, but a Father and a Friend. "Let God be your universe," He virtually tells them, "and every gift you have will be raised to the power of infinity." You will move mountains, you will love your enemies, you who are slaves will be kings; "and nothing shall be impossible unto you." This is the end of religious education—to raise men to the full stature of manhood, not so much by bringing them to God, but by bringing God to them.

It was, of course, not enough to lay down general principles. One has to be concrete and specific with a childish

mind; and Jesus had to go into considerable detail in order to illustrate what He meant. How meekness and love and faith operate in human relations through the new relation to God He shows with much patient elaboration in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. The content of this part of our Lord's teaching does not belong to our immediate purpose; but the reference to it may serve to remind us of another characteristic of Jesus' quality as a Teacher. The Sermon on the Mount closes with the "Parable of the Two Houses," which is intended to enforce the necessity of doing as the corollary of hearing. "No impression," says the modern psychologist, "without expression." The great problem is to be sure that the expression be not the wrong one; and it may be said that the central problem of religious education is rightly and closely to harness the will to the idea. If the educational process is not to miscarry, doing must follow the hearing with spontaneity and without strain.

It is at this point that the personality of the teacher tells. Herein lay the high mastery of Jesus the Teacher. He trans-

mitted the impulse to action. But how? It is idle to attempt to analyse it. Psychology is still guessing at the mystery of how one personality tells upon another. It was not the admiration that Jesus evoked that constrained emulation, nor the confidence that He won that compelled obedience—not these alone, though these were necessary elements of the total fact. But personality is so subtle a thing that it is in vain that we endeavour to trace the thousand and one hidden channels by which it passes itself on. One cannot explain how it came to pass that Arnold, of Rugby, and Thring, of Uppingham, left their image and superscription so indelibly upon their pupils; yet they did it. Jesus also did it, but, unlike them, He does it still. The best we teachers and preachers can do is to lead children and men to His feet. He is the Teacher, the supreme Teacher still. We have to learn of Him, and all He asks is docility. The meek and the poor in spirit are His pupils. Upon them He impresses His own personality as of old; to them He communicates Himself. Men have called Beethoven and Mozart and others masters,

because they were the supreme teachers and exponents of music; Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, each in his own art is called master, because he is of those who have given it its highest expression—and men still sit at their feet. That is the mark of the highest teaching. It is imperishable, abiding. And so we call Jesus Master because He gave the perfect expression to this art of life, because He has been the supreme exponent in life and teaching of the manhood which we share with Him. One, still, is our *Master,* even Christ.

V

JESUS THE FRIEND

If friendship be a natural tendency of our manhood, if it be the expression and satisfaction of a true human instinct, it is inevitable that we should seek and find it at its best in the life of Jesus. Yet it comes to us with a sharp sense of paradox that Jesus should sometimes seem to belittle human relationships. To do the will of God brought one closer to Him than was His own mother. That, however, only means that spiritual relationships are far deeper and more intimate than those which depend on physical or accidental connections. It is on this high plane that the friendships of Jesus moved; and all the greatest friendships have ever moved on this plane. The highest expressions of human life have invariably a spiritual dynamic; just as the greatest art is religious art, and as the greatest heroisms have a religious impulse, so great friend-

ships rest upon a spiritual affinity. There are no friends like those who are first of all friends of God. Man is always at his highest, in art, in literature, in friendship, just at the point where his nature touches God.

The history of Jesus reveals the fact that even within this spiritual circle there are grades and degrees of intimacy. The whole story of the friendships of Jesus will never be told. Of the four hundred days which, on the lowest computation, His ministry must have lasted, the Gospels tell us the story of only forty. Nine-tenths of our Lord's public life is hidden from us; and it is probable that an equal proportion of His personal relationships is unknown to us. We have an occasional glimpse of His unrecorded friendships; and we would give much to know more about His friendship with the man who lent Him the upper room, and that other unknown friend from whom He borrowed the ass's colt. Up and down the country, He must have had a considerable circle of friends such as these. But of these Jesus had selected twelve to be with Him always. Within this small group it is

quite easy to discern a smaller company of three — Peter, James, and John — whom He took with Him to the Mount, and into the Garden of the Agony. And even within this inner ring there was one of whom it is particularly said that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. Side by side with this circle we recall another very intimate group, which contained Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene; and it is in His intercourse with these His friends that we find Him fairest and loveliest. There is no more perfect idyll in literature than the story of His intimacy with the family at Bethany.

On the very threshold of the Gospel story we encounter Jesus' genius for friendship. The warm, kindly, genial air which His personality exhaled, and which won for Him His first disciples, prepares us for that splendid manifestation of His singular gift of friendliness which we have in the story of the Cana marriage. Here was a company of His friends — lowly, obscure peasants — involved in a very awkward predicament; and He did not hesitate to use His unique power to deliver them from their

embarrassment. It is a great commentary upon Him that His first miracle was an act of friendship. The true test of the quality of our friendship is the price we are prepared to pay for it. There are some people who keep their friends because they find them useful. They practise friendship because it pays. But this is not friendship. It is the exploitation of love in the interest of selfishness. The essence of friendship lies in sacrifice, in what it takes from us rather than in what it brings us.

The Cana incident is typical of the whole record of Jesus' friendships. His love for the Bethany people drew Him into the danger zone after He had deliberately retired from it awhile. Their extremity had become the opportunity of His friendship. It is at such times that friendship is put to the proof. Even its own sorrows and cares do not make it unmindful of those of its beloved. "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them *to the end*." *That* is true friendship. It is known by its steadiness and its sacrifice.

"Henceforth," said Jesus to His

disciples once, "I call you not servants, but I have called you friends; for all things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." Between master and servant there is always a certain reserve; there must be some measure of reserve if the relationship is to be maintained on proper terms. But between friend and friend there is no reserve. Friendship is a kind of spiritual communism in which knowledge and aspiration, joy and sorrow, are held in common; and it only lives and thrives on this understanding. It receives no more damaging hurt than when one friend withholds some knowledge or some sorrow from the other. The cry of injured friendship is, "You might have told *me*." Of course, there is a certain region in our lives into which our nearest and dearest cannot enter; indeed, in all the very deepest passages of life we must generally be alone—with God. Jesus went into the Wilderness of Temptation alone; and though He took three with Him into Gethsemane, yet He Himself went a stone's throw apart. There is an innermost, a holiest of the soul, which is forbidden to friendship; but outside

this, friendship does demand the freedom and the franchise of the whole life. By His own witness, Jesus withheld nothing from His friends.

Though friendship, as we have seen, is best known by its gifts, it should not be forgotten that it has also some demands to make. If we are going to accept friendship, we must accept it in all its consequences, in its exactions as well as its benefits. "Ye are My friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." Friendship exercises a certain moral discipline on us. Our best friends are those who compel us to be and to do our best, by consistently expecting it of us and helping us to do it. Jesus required, and made His friends *feel* that He required, the very best they had it in them to give. When they fell below the standard, He did not spare them. It is true that a real friend will make allowances for our failures and our faults; but it is not true to say that he will shut his eyes to them. To say that love is blind is a falsehood; love sees more clearly than any eye; and while it pities, it does not spare. Peter was frequently

falling below the standard; and while Jesus' heart bled for him, He did not shrink from telling him the truth. "Get thee behind Me, Satan," was the wound of a friend. He is no true friend who condones our sins or justifies our failures. At the same time, when praise could help and inspire, Jesus never withheld it. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," said He one day when Peter began to scale unexpected heights. "Mary hath chosen the good part which shall not be taken away," He said of the trustful, docile sister of the troubled Martha. The true friend possesses the genius of helping us on to the high places. Praise and blame, commendation and rebuke—he sees where each is needed. His business is to stimulate us to the highest spiritual distinction and the noblest moral endeavour; and no man ever did this as Jesus did.

It has been said that "religion is simply the friendship of the believer with Christ"; and Jesus brings still to the business of friendship the qualities which adorned His friendships in the days of His flesh.

VI

JESUS IN CONTROVERSY

JESUS, it is safe to assume, desired to avoid controversy. He seems to be at His best when He is speaking quietly to an individual, in the intimacy of a definitely spiritual intercourse; and though in such cases we find argument, it is not argument of the polemic kind which constitutes controversy. Controversy suggests a state of war, and warfare of any kind was abhorrent to Jesus. But when controversy was inevitable, as it frequently turned out to be, Jesus did not shrink. Indeed, it is not only true that He did not shrink from controversy (which may mean only that He assumed a defensive attitude), but at least on one occasion, having beaten off His enemies, He carries the war into their country and finally routs them. That was when, after having repulsed His aggressors three times in succession, He takes up their own weapon and confutes

them out of their own mouths by the question concerning the Messiah's relationship to David.

From the nature of the case, Jesus could not avoid controversy. He was bringing a new thing into the world—a new spirit, a new way of life; and the innovator will always, as Walter Bagehot says, make "conservative people cross with the agony of a new idea." But Jesus was doing something more than this. He came by the sheer force of circumstances right up against an old system and old traditions; and, as He Himself said, at an early stage of His ministry, new wine must burst old wine-skins. He clearly foresaw the inevitable conflict—with which the story of the race is full—between the old institution and the new spirit; and He faced it frankly and without fear.

Let us try to define Jesus' attitude to the institutions which He found facing Him. In the fifth chapter of Matthew we have a discourse from which we are entitled to infer that Jesus had no quarrel with the old simply because it was old. He was no iconoclast who would abolish ancient things without question. The

old, he maintained, was good so far as it went, but it did not go far enough. But He went farther, and said that the essential spirit of the old was absolutely good. But the specific applications of it which were made in the Mosaic code were inadequate; so Jesus proceeds to show how the underlying spirit of the law was capable of application over an area and in circumstances far beyond anything the law had ever contemplated. In other words, Jesus is emphasising the primacy of the spirit over the letter, and this was His determining principle of thought regarding the moral life.

What Jesus desired was that the truth which underlay the old tradition should be developed and carried through to all its natural and logical consequences. There had been development in Judaism, but this development had no spiritual impulse; it had led to the sterility of a fine-drawn legalism. Jesus saw that all these barren by-path developments must be swept away, and that the living core of the ancient revelation might be extricated and liberated, so that it might henceforth develop along the right lines.

He claimed that it was He, and not the Pharisees, the official religious heads of the nation, who stood in the main line of the true advance of revelation; and it was the uniqueness of His position that He added to this claim another—to wit, that He Himself embodied in His own person and life the complete light of revelation of which all that had gone before was but the promise. "I," He asserted, "am the Truth."

Jesus saw all this with a certain plain and simple directness — a circumstance which gave Him a great advantage in controversy. Had there been any obscurity or uncertainty in His own mind, He must have fallen frequently into the pitfalls which His astute enemies prepared for Him with so much assiduity. As it was, however, He seems to have confounded them with ease, swiftly and completely.

The controversies in which Jesus became involved may be divided into two broad classes. The first of these we may fitly call controversies of the lesser order, and their peculiar characteristic is that in them Jesus used His enemies' weapons. In the other class, the con-

troversies of the greater order, there is a very much larger sweep, because Jesus falls back upon great ultimate principles. The difference between the two kinds of controversy is the difference between guerrilla warfare and a pitched battle ordered by the strategy of a great general with abundant reinforcements.

1. Of the controversies of the lesser order we may single out five, not so much because they are typical, but because they show the ingenuity of the enemy's assaults and the resourcefulness of Jesus.

(1.) One of the most legitimate and effective controversial weapons is the *reductio ad absurdum*, in which one endeavours to analyse the enemies' propositions, and show that, logically pursued, they lead to self-contradiction. The instance which springs to the mind is that in which Jesus refutes the charge that He cast out devils by Beelzebub by the simple demonstration that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Beelzebub would hardly undo his own work.

(2.) The issue of many controversies

hangs upon the conflict of *words,* or upon the precise interpretation of a *single word.* Of these *verbal* controversies, we may recall, first, Jesus' demonstration of the truth of the resurrection as against the Sadducees by His insistence upon the present tense in the expression, "I *am* the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob," which obviously means that He is the God not of dead men, but of living men; and, second, the confuting of the Pharisees by opposing to their statement that the Messiah was David's *son,* David's own statement that He was his *Lord.*

(3.) Another effective controversial method is that of impaling the adversary on the horns of a *dilemma*—of which Jesus' question to the Pharisees concerning the baptism of John is an excellent instance. It was a fair and direct challenge when Jesus asked them whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. If they had replied that it was from heaven, they laid themselves open to the question why they had not submitted to it; if, on the other hand, they had said it was from men, they would have to reckon with the anger of

the crowd, who believed that John was a prophet.

(4.) A fourth method is that of the answer, "*et tu quoque*," which is virtually showing the adversary that he lives in a glass house, and therefore cannot afford to throw stones. When the Pharisees objected to His and His disciples' eating with unwashed hands, He showed to them that they were guilty of a far graver breach of the law in certain of their enactments regarding the limits of filial obligation.

(5.) A fifth mode of controversy is that of appealing to an authority which the adversary regards as final and absolute in support of one's own propositions. The controversy about divorce is settled by simply pointing out what Moses had stated in perfectly plain terms.

2. In controversies of the greater order, the characteristic method of Jesus is to bring up great incontrovertible principles, and to assert these as final and beyond argument. This is the greatest kind of controversial strategy. It is to carry the issue to the arbitrament of those eternal truths which are not to be called into question.

(1.) Consider, for instance, the controversy which arose out of the disciples plucking corn on the Sabbath. Jesus, first of all, meets the Pharisees' objection by reminding them of what David did when he was hungry. From this incident Jesus infers and expands the general principle that the needs of humanity are greater than the claims of any institution, a principle which He crystallised in the great saying, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

It is noteworthy that, in this cycle of controversies, Jesus always uses the title, the "Son of Man." He, as representative man, claimed on behalf of all men sovereignty over the Sabbath, and by inference over every other institution; and if the institution stood in the way of ministering to a human being in extremity, then it must be disregarded.

(2.) But in another incident Jesus carries the principle farther. He shows that not only did He not break the law by healing on the Sabbath, but that the law was on His side. He did not in this case proceed by saying that if the law conflicted with human need it must be discarded. He rather showed that

the law actually did permit deeds of kindness to be done on the Sabbath day. How much more was it right to heal a man on the Sabbath if it was right to succour an ox or an ass on that day?

(3.) The same spaciousness of view is to be seen in the incident concerning the tribute-money. His enemies were trying to inveigle Him into seditious speech, but He was not merely turning the flank of an awkward question when He raised the issue to the plane of ultimate principle by saying that men should give to Cæsar what was Cæsar's and what was God's to God. He is clearly stating the indisputable principle that in all questions of personal conduct the court of final appeal was a man's own conscience as God's vicegerent in his soul; and that a man should, without question and at all costs, give absolute primacy to the claims of God, disposing and ordering his conduct altogether according to this test.

(4.) Another instance of the elevation of controversy from the triviality of trichotomy to the plane of ultimate principle is Jesus' answer to the question as to the greatest commandment in the law.

This was an old, vexed question among the lawyers. Jesus' answer virtually was that there was only one commandment in the law—namely, love; but the commandment had two broad applications, God-ward and man-ward; and the whole law was but the amplification of these two central principles.

These were Jesus' methods in controversy; but while we wonder at the clarity and courage and resourcefulness which He displayed, it is in another region that He mostly manifests His superiority to us in controversy. For, despite the persistency of His enemies, He was never betrayed into any fault or weakness of temper. He had indignation, but no unreasoning anger. Though He said hard things about His enemies, it was not because of what they had done to Him; and in all His hard sayings there was no vindictiveness. He loved His enemies even when He was routing them off the field.

VII

JESUS IN SOCIETY

WHAT was Jesus' bearing in what we commonly call social intercourse? We know that He held Himself to be intimately and organically related to the life of the community to which He belonged. Unlike the Pharisee, He did not regard Himself as a person who, by reason of superior piety or higher social standing, stood apart from the mass of His fellows. He was the friend of publicans and sinners on the one hand. He was, on the other hand, no less the friend of such Pharisees as He found accessible. He accepted the hospitality of Zaccheus, the publican, and Simon, the Pharisee, on the same terms. While He recognised the existence of social and other distinctions, it does not appear to have in the least affected His own bearing and conduct. He was no respecter of persons, because He respected the underlying humanity of every person.

Jesus, Son of Man

Jesus' relation to the social life of His time was difficult and complex. A private individual of refinement and courtesy, gracious and noble in manner, magnanimous and generous in temper, can become a *persona grata* with all sorts and conditions of men, and pass through life receiving universal respect and honour. But it was not in the nature of things that Jesus should be a private individual. He had a mission and a cause, to which He was uncompromisingly loyal; and this compelled Him to undertake a public ministry. This circumstance determined and defined His general relation to the main currents of the social life of the time.

It was in a sense the tragedy of His life that this relation should have been one of exclusion. With His great genius for society, and all the gifts He had to give to society, He was virtually an outcast and an outsider. He had, it is true, periods of popularity with the common people; but popular favour is as unstable as water. The crowd which cheered Him to-day was the crowd which jeered at Him to-morrow. It was this sense of being compelled to stand outside the

main stream of His people's life that found expression in that sad word: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." They could find room for sects and parties of all kinds in their life, but the Son of Man they ostracised. This was, of course, the penalty of the position which He took up. He was neither the first nor the last to suffer it. It has been the invariable fortune of the prophet in every age: "He came unto His own; and they that were His own received Him not."

This does not mean that Jesus was denied opportunities of social intercourse with a great number of people. It only means that He did not stand in the midst of the throb and hum of the public life of His people except, of course, on those occasions when the throb and hum gathered around Himself, either in friendly enthusiasm or passionate opposition. He had no share in the councils of the national leaders; He was boycotted by the ecclesiastical clique that controlled popular sentiment. He was disliked and feared by the whole company of religious officials. Nicodemus

came to Him under cover of darkness for fear of his colleagues. Nevertheless, this did not prevent Jesus from coming into close and frequent contact with many individuals and groups of individuals; and in all this He stands out as the perfect embodiment of social grace.

It is inevitable that a student of the Gospels should mark out as the chief quality in the social bearing of Jesus its naturalness and spontaneity. He does not appear to take at all seriously the little conventions and absurdities which constitute so much of what we call "good manners." These are only a veneer which a scoundrel may wear. At the same time He took occasion at a certain house to teach the guests a lesson in social propriety. But this lesson, like His entire social code, had its origin in certain foundation principles of conduct. There is no true social propriety except that which ensues from the working out of honesty, ingrained gentleness, and lowliness of mind. There are certain small conventionalities of a mechanical kind which add to the ease and comfort of social intercourse; but the most perfect mastery of these does not produce

genuine social grace. That is the product of a certain posture of the soul. It cannot be acquired artificially. It is a flower which grows, and not a habit which can be assumed. The true "gentleman" is he who is first of all a gentleman in his heart, be he peer or peasant. Whatever he may have of polish and manner beyond this is so much embroidery—an embroidery which is beautiful only when the wearer is worthy.

"The man's the gowd for a' that."

The naturalness of Jesus' social conduct emerges frequently. We see it in His readiness to fraternise with publicans and sinners. With entire spontaneity, without any question in His own mind concerning its propriety or its impropriety, He went and sat down at Matthew's table, and became a guest in Zaccheus' house. It is idle to suppose that Jesus did this of set purpose, to defy either ecclesiastical sentiment or public opinion. He did it naturally, without ulterior motive—simply because He must. He did not even ask Himself whether it was right or wrong. He went where His heart led Him—and whether

it was to the house of Zaccheus or the home of Simon, the leper, He went in entire simplicity of soul. And, when He went, He had no air of either conferring or receiving a favour. Just as He condescended to no man, so no man could condescend to Him. Too lowly to patronise, too kingly to be patronised, He was His own natural self in all His dealings.

This worked out in a certain candour of judgment and directness of speech which on occasion was not a little disconcerting to those who had laid themselves open to it. It is rather our habit to condone and to extenuate the offences of people whom we deem our social equals or superiors. This is, of course, pure snobbishness. It is to put social distinction above moral responsibility, to be so influenced by a person's social status that we do not recognise the true dimensions of his sin. We tend, on the other hand, to unjust severity toward the sin of our inferiors. But with Jesus neither social eminence nor even the supposed obligations of one who is a guest prevented Him from seeing a situation in its bare truth and from dealing with it accordingly.

This does not mean that Jesus ever departed from perfect courtesy. When He rebuked Simon in his own house He did it with absolute grace, but the rebuke lacked nothing in candour. Simon had neglected the ordinary courtesies due to a guest; an obscure woman had broken in upon the company, and had exceeded these courtesies. But Simon's position did not save him from a lesson in deportment which he did not lightly forget. The same quality of candour appears in Jesus' rebuke of those who chose the chief seats at the table. Yet in both these cases the ground of the rebuke did not lie in conventional usage. The lesson was based upon deep moral principles which are central to the art of gracious social bearing.

But if Jesus' candour never forsook Him, neither did His chivalry. Recall the story of the woman caught in adultery. The revisers regard this incident as of dubious authenticity, but it is so completely characteristic that it can hardly be an invention. This poor woman's condition appealed directly to His chivalry. He instinctively sided with the one who was down. In spite

of the woman's sin He took her part, and routed her persecutors. He did not condone her sin; He called it sin. But He bade her go and sin no more. The mediæval knight exercised his chivalry toward the women of his own class. He was none so knightly in his dealings with the peasant's daughter. But the chivalry of Jesus saw only a woman in need. He made no question of who or what she was. She was persecuted, and her plight called out His unfailing compassion.

Profound reverence for real humanity, endless compassion for fallen humanity, undisguised contempt for self-exalted humanity—these were the springs of Jesus' social bearing. These things were the natural products of His own plain, simple, unspoilt humanity. It was from this that the tenderness which drew little children to Him, His quick, sympathetic understanding of other people's troubles, His unfailing gentleness to the bruised and broken, His swift response to the need of the sufferer and the mourner, His downright reality, and His fearlessness of public opinion in the matter of His intimacies, really sprang.

But the one word which gathers up

all these attributes is the word "grace." We use the term frequently to describe the easy, rhythmical, gentle, well-poised motions of a well-proportioned, well-carried body. But it belongs by right to the soul. That same quality of gentle, unstrained, balanced bearing of the soul toward its fellows—that is true grace. It is the spontaneous outgoing of a love-charged spirit; and Jesus was the embodiment of it. It is the only adequate word to describe God's bearing towards man.

In Mrs. Russell Gurney's Letters a story is told in connection with the late Lord Mount Temple. A woman in a wholly different station in life, who had occasion to see him on business frequently, said at the time of his death: "I go to other great houses and come away wanting to hide myself. But I always came away from him glad to be alive."

"Yes," said the narrator of the story, "his courtesy was perfect."

"Well," said the woman, "it may have been; but I always thought it was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Grace—that is the word; and one may try to analyse it to the end of time without ever truly capturing its essence.

VIII

JESUS IN PRAYER

It is hardly too much to say that if we are to discover the secret of the strength, the sereneness, the equanimity of Jesus, His "glorious morning face," His unfailing insight into situations of all kinds, we must seek Him out at prayer. Curiously enough, however, comparatively little is recorded concerning His habits and modes of prayer. We are told here and there, with the utmost simplicity, that He went to a mountain or a desert-place to pray, but we are not told what He prayed for.

Of instances where He directly addresses God the Gospels record six: The two thanksgivings in Matthew xi. 25 and John xi. 41, 42; the intercession in John xvii.; the prayer in John xii. 27, 28, "Father, save Me from this hour. . . ."; and the prayers in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

Jesus in Prayer

With the exception of the great intercession, these are all very brief and simple prayers; yet they are sufficient to indicate the general character of Jesus' approach to God, and to confirm what we should infer from His teaching to be His own conception of the form and matter of prayer.

Two of these recorded prayers are thanksgivings, and it is a matter of some surprise that Jesus does not seem to have included the element of thanksgiving in what we have come to call "The Lord's Prayer." It is perhaps legitimate to gather that the gratitude is taken for granted, for if there be not behind the prayer a heart which has cause for gratitude, clearly there can be none of that assurance in prayer which is essential to its effectiveness.

In the New Testament several words are used in connection with prayer; of these only two occur in the Gospels with definite reference to prayer *to God*. These two are *proseuchē* and *deēsis*. Apparently the difference between them is that the former refers to prayer in general, whereas the latter refers to specific petitions. For example:

Proseuchē	*Deēsis*
Matthew xvii. 21, "This kind goeth not out but by *prayer* and fasting."	Luke i. 13, "Thy *prayer* is heard."

The words are used in connection with our Lord's own praying:

Luke xxii. 45, "When he rose up from *prayer*" (*proseuchē*).	Luke xxii. 32, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (the verbal form of *deēsis*).

It is safe to infer from these passages that our Lord's prayers were of two kinds—first, a pouring out of Himself before God; and, second, specific and definite petitions. Moreover, He enjoins prayer in both kinds upon His disciples.

There is probably a further distinction to be drawn. The word *proseuchē* seems generally to have reference to the soul's personal communion with God, while *deēsis* seems to be applied to supplication and intercession for others. It is likely that when Jesus went to a desert-place apart to pray, it was primarily with the purpose of relating His own life and work to the will of God, and of drawing personal strength for the discharge of His great task. It was a bringing of

Himself to the fountain-head, a return to the base for supplies, a definite and deliberate process of adjusting Himself to God so that He might not err or fail among men. This it is legitimate to infer from the one occasion in which the curtain is lifted upon Jesus' intimacy of intercourse with His Father—namely, in the Agony of Gethsemane. We are not, however, to gather from this that in His prayers He omitted to make definite and specific petitions for others. His prayer for Peter and the great intercession are cases in point.

Of Jesus' attitude of mind in prayer there is a good deal we may conclude from what we know of His praying and His teaching concerning prayer.

The simplicity of the recorded prayers of Jesus is paralleled by the simplicity of the prayer which He taught His disciples, and in particular is it illustrated by the emphatic warning which He gave against the wanton elaboration of prayers. The vain repetitions of the heathen, the long prayers of the Pharisees, were inconsistent with the childlike approach to God which is the very heart of genuine prayer.

This, however, is not an argument against *importunity* in prayer. For this is a quality of true prayer enforced by Jesus in the two parables of the Unjust Judge and the Sleepy Neighbour, and illustrated by the persistency of His own prayers when He spent the night in supplication, and by His three prayers in the Garden. There is a whole world of difference between the petulant and infantile insistency of the priests of Baal with their interminable "Baal, hear us," and the sustained pleading of a child that knows itself to be beloved. Importunity in prayer does not mean that we have to do with an unwilling God; it is simply the guarantee we give of the reality and the genuineness of our praying.

There is also both in our Lord's example and teaching a considerable emphasis upon *deliberateness* in prayer. Both in His own teaching, when He bids men go to their secret chambers, to go definitely to a stated place in a stated way, and by His own example, when He goes again and again away from the crowd to some secluded place in order to pray, He is virtually telling us to

make a business of prayer. Prayer should not be a casual and spasmodic religious exercise, to be put in at any odd moment; it is to be a deliberately arranged and fixed part of our life. We do not know enough in detail about our Lord's life to say that He led a regular and systematic prayer-life; but what we do know points in that direction. This does not mean that there is no place or use for unpremeditated and occasional prayer. On the contrary, it is only those to whom prayer has, through regularity, become a fundamental and integral part of life who really understand and feel the constraint of occasional prayer. They only who know the road to God because they tread it regularly, know it well enough to be able to pick it out at any place and at any hour of the day.

It is hardly necessary to point out the note of intimate *confidence in God* in our Lord's prayers. The background of all Jesus' praying was that of His thanksgiving—"I knew that Thou hearest Me always." The absolute certainty born of faith and confirmed by experience that God hears prayer is the first condition of effectual praying.

Last of all, it is needful that we should in this connection recall one circumstance of some difficulty. Jesus enjoins on His disciples prayer both in solitude and in fellowship. Of the former He gave them an example; but though He spoke of the twos and threes meeting in His name, and promised success to the prayers of "two who shall agree as touching what they shall ask," yet it does not appear that at any time He prayed *with His disciples*. He always—even when His disciples were with Him—prayed alone. Even in the Garden He went a stone's throw apart. It was, according to Luke, on one of these occasions of solitary prayer that the disciples asked Him, "Teach us to pray."

This is a circumstance which is only to be explained by the assumption that Jesus stood in a relationship to God which no human being could possibly share with Him. In His prayers He stood on a plane which was inaccessible even to His disciples. This is a fact of the utmost importance for our interpretation of the Person of Jesus. It is confirmed by the further circumstance that at no time did He address God as "our

Father," and the words were on His lips only when He was putting them on His disciples' lips. He even went so far as to speak of "My Father and your Father, My God and your God," which is demonstration final and incontrovertible that Jesus felt and knew that He was to God what no other man could be, and that God was to Him what He could be to no other man.

IX

JESUS IN AGONY

GETHSEMANE is one of those great passages of history in which there seems to be a concentration of experience which we cannot with our finite and fallible measures exhaust. When we have done our best in the way of interpretation, we are left with the feeling that there is more left unsaid than we have succeeded in capturing into words. Do what we will, we return again with the sense that the inmost truth of the incident is still to be discovered. Here we see

> "Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish
> Forced through the channels of a single heart,"

and the half can never be told of all that Jesus thought and felt in that hour of agony on the lower slope of Olivet.

Our present interest in the story of the Agony gathers around the light which it

throws, not so much upon the nature of Jesus' mission, as upon Jesus Himself. We are less concerned with what it tells us concerning Jesus' task than with what it has to say concerning His attitude to His task. This, however, entails an effort, however slight, to appreciate the significance of the incident in its relation to the whole career of Jesus; but that can only be done when it is understood that our interpretations must of necessity be tentative and provisional. For in the last analysis it is clear that Gethsemane can only yield its meaning to us in the measure that we are able to share deeply, and with some intimacy, the experience of Jesus. Gethsemane will to the end refuse its clue to those who do not approach it in the spirit of sympathy and fellowship with Jesus; who regard it only as an incident to be explained, and not as an experience in some sort to be shared.

There is some variation in the evangelists' accounts of the episode, but the differences are not material. The essence of the story is identical in the three narratives. Matthew and Mark record three distinct acts of prayer, Luke only two. Mark gives the words of one prayer

only, while in Matthew two separate prayers are given. Matthew's account enables us to follow more closely the progress of the Agony. The first prayer, which is recorded by the three evangelists, is for the removal of the cup, Matthew adding, "if it be possible," Mark adding, "Father, all things are possible unto Thee," Luke adding, "if Thou be willing."

The second prayer, recorded by Matthew only, is a prayer of assent and surrender. "If this cup cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done."

The interpretation of the passage turns upon the meaning we give to the word "cup." Clearly it had reference to some prospective experience of which bitterness and pain and distress were the ingredients, a storm and a struggle from which Jesus shrank. It has been interpreted variously. It has, for instance, been regarded as implying the fear of physical suffering and death, an interpretation which may be dismissed summarily, for this sets Jesus on a lower plane of manhood than the martyrs whom He inspired. The "cup" must be

conceived of as lying in some circumstance connected with His death, and three main alternatives are propounded.

1. It is suggested that He feared to die before His work was done. This view, however, supposes that it was necessary that Jesus should die *in a particular way*. We cannot believe it was needful that Jesus should have to wait to endure the Cross in order to save the world, for He was bearing the sin of the world as really in the Agony as on His Cross. We may recall Joseph Parker's saying that *Jesus was never off the Cross*. There is, moreover, no evidence of such physical exhaustion as would account for such an apprehension.

2. It is suggested also that He shrank from that exhibition of human sin which His death would provoke. Men were His brethren, and He recoiled from the sight of so great infamy, so unspeakable a crime against God as His death would constitute. There is much plausibility in this view, but by far the most convincing is that

3. Jesus foresaw the rupture of His relationship with His Father which actually came to pass on the Cross. The

climax of Jesus' passion was reached in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We stand upon the threshold of a great mystery. Somehow, in this manner of sin-bearing it was necessary that there should be a break in that filial intercourse with God which was the very breath of Jesus' life. It was the prospect of this rupture that shook Him like a reed before the wind in that dark hour in the Garden. The last horror for Jesus was to lose sight of His Father's face: yet this was to be the price of saving the world. Before this mystery we must needs stand unshod, wondering.*

We may, however, look upon the figure of Jesus and remark His bearing. We notice how conscious of weakness He was in face of the impending storm, we discover His craving for sympathy, and these are things which bind Him very intimately to our common humanity. Most of us have passed through circumstances in which we have discovered our utter weakness, and which have created

* For a full discussion of these alternative interpretations, see the article on the Agony in Hastings' "Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels."

in us a profound hunger for sympathy. We have also discovered perchance in such seasons what broken reeds our nearest and dearest have turned out to be. When we turned to them in the fond hope that they were watching with us, we found them asleep. Perhaps, unlike Jesus, we made no allowance for *their* weariness.

But what appears most profoundly impressive in this story is the great and inevitable solitude of its central Figure. There are passages in life in which we all must needs stand alone, deep experiences of the soul which not our best beloved can share with us. We may take them with us so far, and then we must leave them and go ourselves, as it were, a stone's throw apart. But there was an element in the loneliness of Jesus which must ever be absent from ours. When we are constrained into the central solitude, it is by reason of our own affairs; but Jesus passed into this ultimate loneliness because He was bearing our sorrows. The loneliness of Jesus was the dereliction of a race focused within a single soul. "I have trodden the wine-press alone"—for so and not otherwise

it had to be. And whatever of human sympathy He might have received in that hour, it could never have availed to follow Him into that unspeakable desolation of spirit through which He had to pass before reaching the final act of our redemption.

How any reasonable explanation of Gethsemane is possible without bringing in theological considerations it is impossible to see. That chronic melancholia from which the poet Cowper suffered may in all probability be explained adequately on psychological grounds; and the not infrequent passages of acute spiritual distress through which the great saints were constrained to travel may not be beyond diagnosis at the hands of an expert in spiritual things. At any rate, none of these conditions require for their understanding the importation of such stupendous extraneous factors as seem to be needful in the case of Gethsemane. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful—but for no reason that appertained to His own life. There was nought in His past that called for sorrow, no occasion for contrition or remorse. And nothing short of our traditional view

that the Agony of the Garden bore some relation to the redemption of men is adequate to explain it.

Can this connection be reasonably made? What was the significance of Gethsemane to the work of redemption? It is to be noticed that Jesus fought His battle out here in prayer with His face on the ground*—an indication of the intensity of His prayer. We are told that "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." We require to pass into great extremity before we are enabled to pray with this intensity. But probably a great extremity of this kind would not move most of us to prayer at all. It would in all likelihood paralyse us into inertia. But prayer was so constant a habit of Jesus that in His great extremity He turned to it spontaneously and easily. He had kept the secret road to God clear and in good repair, so that in His need He found it passable and open. One has known people in deep waters who confessed that they could not then pray, that prayer brought them no reinforcement. But one suspects that their prayers failed in that hour because they

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

had failed to pray habitually and steadily before they came to it. Jesus reaped the reward of His nights spent in prayer in the triumph which His prayer brought Him in this crisis. No one who fails to pray steadily in the sunshine will make much of prayer when the storm breaks.

And through prayer came victory to Jesus. The climax of interest in this story comes in the change which ensued in Jesus' attitude to the cup. The prayer for deliverance from it becomes a prayer of acquiescence in it. Here we must speak with bated breath; yet speak we must, for the crux of the whole situation is at this point. To surrender the attempt to understand the meaning of this change is to let the entire significance of Gethsemane escape us. It is difficult for us to understand how Jesus came to shrink so greatly from His Father's will—and the more difficult in view of our commonly received doctrines of His person. The fact remains, however, that He did so shrink, and prayed that He might escape the cup. It was only after a struggle that He passed into the attitude of accepting the cup, whatever it might cost Him. It is, moreover, significant that in a refer-

ence to this incident in Hebrews v. 7, 8, Jesus is represented as praying to be delivered from death, which prayer was not granted; yet, adds the writer, "He learned obedience by the things He suffered." That was God's answer to His prayer. He gave Him the power of obedience to the uttermost. What Jesus suffered we cannot even guess. We can see no more than the margin of that hidden battlefield. But we may well believe with the writer of Hebrews that it was a part of the discipline of Jesus that with perfect unquestioning obedience He might offer the perfect sacrifice.

The life of Jesus was a preparation for the Cross; and, as we have already seen, the climax of the Passion was the cry of dereliction. In some deep, inscrutable way it was necessary for our redemption that the relation between God and His Son should for the moment be ruptured, that the face of God should pass into eclipse before the eyes of His Son. But if our redemption was to be complete, this relationship, the rupture of which it involved, must needs be perfect. The life of Jesus was a process of perfecting that relationship—a discipline by which

He was brought into ever-increasing intimacy of fellowship with God; and this process came to its end in the Garden. Jesus was never in closer, more intimate relationship to His Father than when He said, "Not My will, but Thine, be done." It was the perfect surrender of the perfect Son, the very high-water mark of Jesus' union with God. The completeness of the sacrifice which He came to offer depended upon the perfection of that bond, in the breach of which the sacrifice was to be consummated; the bond was perfected in the Garden of Gethsemane. Surely this must be the significance of this wonderful incident—it forged that perfect bond between Father and Son by the surrender of which the world's sin was to be carried away. It was the final act in the discipline of the great Priest Who was to offer Himself a perfect and sufficing sacrifice.

X

JESUS IN DEATH

By common consent, the death of Jesus is the most momentous event recorded in history. It has proved to be the watershed of the ages. From it have issued forth broad and fruitful streams of influence which flow to-day with undiminished abundance and wealth throughout the world; and not yet have we wholly plumbed the depths of its significance or exhausted the infinite variety of its virtue. To faith, the Cross of Calvary has been central through the centuries; and to thought, it has furnished the supreme problem of history. The last word in the interpretation of the Cross will not be said for many a long day. It is, as Dr. Fairbairn said, "an epitome of the world," a focusing of history to one intense and blinding point of light.

Our present purpose is to discover, so far as that may be, what manner of man

Jesus, Son of Man

Jesus was from the way He died. We are not now primarily concerned with an interpretation of the Cross, though it is quite impossible to separate the question of its significance from our minds. It is, of course, only in the light of what He came to do in the world that we can appraise and analyse His bearing in the circumstances in which He was placed. Two men of wholly identical temperament, cast into identical circumstances, yet seeking different ends—the one, say, in quest of wealth and the other of political reputation—will comport themselves in ways altogether different. Their conduct would be determined by their respective aims. So the mission of Jesus must necessarily be taken into account in some measure if we are to discern from His conduct and bearing what manner of man He was. But in this case the nature and the dimensions of the aim, judged by its consequences at the time and in subsequent ages, are such as we cannot proceed to inquire into, and must take for granted.

A good deal of luminous discussion would ensue from the consideration of Jesus' behaviour during His judicial

trial. But the trial seems to be dwarfed both by what went before and what came after it. From Jesus' own point of view, after all that had happened in the Garden, the trial must have seemed to be something of an irrelevancy. At any rate, He does not appear to have thought it worth while to make a stated defence of Himself. He does not go out of His way to contradict the lying witnesses who had been suborned to appear against Him. He treated Herod with the silence which that dissolute princeling deserved. Jesus did not open His mouth in his presence. Pilate He treated differently. He saw that the Roman procurator was in a difficult position. He was a man with some seed of good in him, and he was torn between his own native Roman instinct of justice and his diplomatic task of pacifying a turbulent, unruly people. It is significant that while Jesus did not raise His voice in self-defence to save Himself, according to the Fourth Gospel He seems to have made a very strong attempt to save Pilate from selling his soul. When, a few hours later, the crowd mocked Him—"Others He saved, Himself He cannot save"—

they were unconsciously describing what Jesus was deliberately doing. It was His programme to save others by not saving Himself. For the rest, His quiet dignity, His perfect grace of bearing in that difficult passage, His unwavering certainty of Himself and of His mission, never broke down. He passes through the welter of that morning, the one figure of the whole multitude Who remained undistracted, and emerged with honour and fair fame intact.

In the act and article of death, our best guide in our inquiry will be the record of Jesus' utterances. The "seven words" are the spontaneous outworkings of Jesus' spirit in the supreme crisis of His life. They are Himself—the simple, spontaneous speech of His heart. Most of His recorded words occur in passages of teaching, or on occasions of controversy; but now He is lifted up far away above the ordinary exchange of human intercourse, and His words have a spontaneous directness which make them perhaps our most authentic clue to the nature of His personality.

One significant incident precedes the utterances. A draught of medicated

wine was offered to Jesus before He was nailed to the Cross. This was a humane custom of the Jews, and it appears that a society of charitable women in Jerusalem charged themselves with the duty of supplying the potion to condemned criminals in order to dull their sensibility to pain. Jesus refused the drink. He would meet His death with quick, unclouded mind. He still had work to do, and He could not afford to surrender His consciousness or His alertness before He had accomplished all that He had set out to do.

The "seven words" divide themselves into two groups of three and four. The first group of three have reference to others, and they all alike reflect the deep compassion which He felt for misguided, broken, and sorrowful folk. His ignorant persecutors, a broken but penitent evil-doer, and His mother—to all alike His love went out. Surely no proof were needed beyond this of the utter unselfishness of Jesus. It had been no marvel if, in the anguish of that hour, He had become incapable of articulate speech; but with His large-hearted, unfailing compassion He prayed for His

executioners. It may indeed have been —it surely must have been—a prayer not for His executioners only, but for all those concerned in the tragedy. None of them knew what they were doing. Blinded by prejudice and popular excitement, they brought Him to His death. Socrates, in the hour of death, had a kindly word for his jailer, but he drank his hemlock with contempt for his Athenian judges. But Jesus, with infinite pity in the midst of His pain, prayed for His enemies and besought that they might be forgiven. Thus did He live out His own precept. This, surely, is perfect love, the perfect fulfilment of His own word—"Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you."

And the King of Love showed Himself in that hour to be also the Saviour of the Penitent. "This day," He says to the dying thief, "this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." These words must be taken as an indication of Jesus' clear consciousness of His Saviourhood. In His life He had claimed authority to forgive sins; and in death He asserts His power to bring men into bliss and

the peace of God. He held the keys of Paradise, and even now, in the hour of His humiliation, He knows it. What a paradox it is! Below, the seething mass of petty human passion, the fury of which He suffers without a protest, what time He holds in His hand the keys of the spiritual world in which all the affairs of this little world of our common experience are disposed and judged. It surely was this sense of spiritual elevation, of being "lifted up," to use His own word, to another plane of life, that accounts for His fortitude in this last crisis. He stood on the ultimate, unperishing reality; all the tumult and noise beneath was the passing illusion. He knew that He had passed beyond the fretful tides of our ordinary workaday life into those upper regions where stable and abiding reality dwells.

Notice His gratitude for, and His satisfaction in, the penitent thief's recognition of Him. Here was this man, also in acute physical pain, yet through all the stupefaction of his anguish Jesus' true light had pierced, and the thief had known Him for his Saviour. Even on the Cross, Jesus' soul leaped out with

gladness to a soul which had discovered kinship with Him.

King of Love, Saviour of the Penitent—so He showed Himself to be in that hour—and then a true mother's son. "Woman, behold thy son!" There have been those who have thought that Jesus' treatment of His mother was somewhat cold and unfilial during the period of His ministry. There is occasionally a seeming note of harshness in the way He addresses her: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Once He even appeared to be disowning her. But perhaps it was that Mary's fond heart had not then truly known her son, and had not reached that kinship with Him which is deeper than motherhood, and which, once established, transfigures even the beauty of motherhood. But *this* is Jesus' last word about His mother, and in the story of human relationships there is nothing more beautiful than this episode. In the agony of that last hour He does not forget to find for His mother a home and another son. In the "Phædo" Plato tells us the story of Socrates' death: "When he had bathed, and his children had been brought to him, and the women

of the family were come, he spoke with them in Crito's presence and gave them his last commands. Then he sent the women and children away and returned to us." And when later his friends began to weep, he said, "I sent away the women in order that they might not offend in this way." There is a touch of coldness and contempt in it all; and though in other ways there is much that is fine and dignified in the death of Socrates, it lacks the fine, fair humanity of this: "Woman, behold thy son!" "Behold thy mother."

Up to this point the utterances of Jesus on the Cross have a reference to others; and they all alike reflect the deep compassion which He felt for broken and misguided men and women. But at this point a change comes over Him. The crisis comes full-flood, and the great darkness falls on Him. His thought hereafter is of Himself.

The cry of dereliction, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is the climax and the central mystery of our Lord's Passion. In the previous study some endeavour was made to indicate what this obscuration of His

Father's face meant to Jesus. It seems clear that the issue hung upon the faith of Jesus. If the faith of Jesus, the Son of Man, could be broken, then the Son of Man would belie the Son of God, and man would be sundered from God for ever. The question at issue was whether the sin of the world was mightier than the love of God. Yet though the cloud of sin rose and obscured the face of God, it shook but it did not break the faith of Jesus. Even in that utter darkness his cry was, *My* God, *My* God. The cry of dereliction was a cry of faith. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," cried Job. And virtually Jesus says, "Though He forsake Me, yet do I trust Him." This hour of dereliction was the hour of victory. From that height of perfect fellowship with God in which He left the Garden, to this profundity and darkness of utter separation—this was the path Jesus had to tread in order to save men. He had taken it with perfect confidence, and in the last blackness of dereliction His faith stood the shock. The victory was won.

The agony of dereliction had physical

consequences, which broke out in the cry, "*I thirst.*" His human nature asserted its frailty, and in this tremendous hour we know Him still to be man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, touched with the feeling of our infirmities. A proper appreciation of the conflict which was being waged may seem to lift Him out of the regions in which we common men and women are at home; but His physical thirst restores Him to us, and we know that He is still fighting our battle.

How long Jesus was in the darkness we do not know, but it did not last. The unbroken faith of Jesus sent the flood of sin recoiling, and the light of His Father's face was restored. With perfect trust He cries out, "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Notice that it is said that He cried "with a great voice." It was a shout of triumph, a song of victory. When the hemlock had nearly done its work on Socrates, he turned to Crito and said, "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius." This was the offering due to the god of healing for restored health, and Socrates was indulging in a little pleasantry. "I am

entering on perfect health" (that is, through death), he seems to say. "Pay my dues to Asclepius for this favour." A pleasantry, with a touch of contempt for current superstition. There is something admirable in the laughing fortitude of this old warrior; but it belongs to another universe than that which we are now contemplating—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Jesus' course came round at last full cycle. He had reached the goal. "It is finished." There remained no more to be done. He laid down His head with the knowledge that all He had set out to do was fully accomplished. He passed with a sense of complete and perfect achievement. When Cecil Rhodes lay dying he is reported to have said: "So much to do, so little done." Not so Jesus. He had accomplished that whereunto He had been sent.

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